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Giving a Syntax to the Cry: Caroline Bergvall's *Drift* (2014)¹

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Abstract (150 words)

This essay offers a Deleuzian reading of *Drift* (2014), a multilingual project by the cross-disciplinary artist Caroline Bergvall. It argues that the text- and performance-project promotes forms of deterritorialization that give radical witness to the contemporary humanitarian crisis in the Mediterranean where thousands of people drown each year as they try to reach Europe. In breaking down barriers between languages, the artistic work employs non-representational modes of address to reflect on what it means to lack citizenship and recognition in the context of the crisis. My close readings challenge post-colonial accusations that the writings of Deleuze and Guattari are at best utopian and at worst politically naïve and without purchase on the real-life catastrophes of Fortress Europe. Instead, Deleuzian strategies are shown to enable Bergvall to actualize a multilingual politics of speech and performance that points towards the historical and contemporary imbrications of the West in mass-drownings of recent years.

Since 2014, the Mediterranean has been ranked ‘the deadliest sea in the world for migrants’ by the International Organization for Migration² and, year on year, thousands of people die in unmarked graves as they try to reach Europe via Mediterranean sea routes.³ Yet despite significant policy and media attention and heightened search and rescue efforts over the past few years, the annual death toll continues to rise in the face of an alarming lack of information about where and how people die at sea.⁴ Frustration at widespread acceptance of these mass-drownings is identified as the explicit starting-point for *Drift* (2014), a multilingual project by the cross-disciplinary artist Caroline Bergvall, that sets out to provide alternative testimony to lives quite literally going under.⁵ In contemplating the urgent task to transmit the current state of emergency at Europe’s southern borders, my concern is to read the politics of Bergvall’s project in terms of what Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari call ‘deterritorialization’, a phenomenon that destabilizes the standard use of language and dislocates sound from meaning. As barriers between languages break down, the text will be shown to devise ‘a materially intense expression’ that — as Deleuze and Guattari suggest in their seminal *Kafka* study — uses ‘syntax in order to cry, to give a syntax to the cry.’⁶ Through a series of close readings, I

respond to accusations from post-colonial critics that the writings of Deleuze and Guattari are at best utopian and at worst politically naïve and without purchase on the real-life events, catastrophes and resistances of Fortress Europe.⁷ I argue instead that the polylingual lyric voice offers a site from which to oppose the oppressions of majoritarian discourse where refugee voices and experience are absent. By holding forms of language to account for their forced exclusions, Bergvall will be seen to enable a Deleuzian reimagining of the world that points towards its hidden nexuses of power, interrelated networks, flows of capital and transnational points of connection.

Bergvall's website describes her book and performance project as 'a complex and haunting meditation on sea travel, exile and history.'⁸ Born in Hamburg and brought up in Geneva, Paris, New York and Oslo, Bergvall is renowned for her multilingual, spoken-word practice and *Drift* draws together Old English and Nordic poetry with the lyrics of pop songs and excerpts from a human rights report into contemporary sea migrants' disaster. *Drift* emerged as a transnational, interdisciplinary collaboration between London-based Bergvall and the Norwegian percussionist Ingar Zach, as well as the visual artist Thomas Köppel and dramaturge Michèle Pralong, both resident in Switzerland. It premiered in Geneva in 2012 and was published as a book of text and drawings by Nightboat Books, Brooklyn, in spring 2014; further UK performances took place in the same year.⁹ The project works not only across media but is centrally concerned with artistic experimentation across languages and time. *Drift* employs two principal sets of intertext. It takes its starting point with the Icelandic *Vinland Sagas*, as well as *The Seafarer*, an Anglo-Saxon poem that recounts the hardships of life at sea, and early Norse lyrics (*Drift* 185–6), employing hybrid forms and neologisms which combine the modern and archaic across different languages. The central contemporary source for *Drift* is a human rights report that documents the 'Left-to-Die Boat' case in which 72 migrants fleeing Tripoli by boat in 2011 were left to drift for fourteen days with no food or water.¹⁰

Instead of reaching the Italian island of Lampedusa, the boat landed back on the Libyan coast with only eleven survivors, two of whom subsequently died. Bergvall's text offers a testimony that consistently reflects on what it means to lack citizenship and recognition in the current crisis.

It is the crucial relation of deterritorializing artistic practice to the political drive for the creation of new citizens — 'the people to come'¹¹ — that makes Deleuze and Guattari such a relevant theoretical lens for Bergvall's engagement with the contemporary Mediterranean situation. Throughout Deleuze and Guattari's thought, 'deterritorialization' proves a shifting term for processes which decontextualize sets of relations and render them virtual. They first introduce the term alongside its counterpart 'reterritorialization' in their *Anti-Oedipus* study of 1972: 'deterritorialization' is used to denote a deconstructive and disruptive moment, whilst 'reterritorialization' designates the forming of new systems or the recontextualization of existing ones.¹² Consistently, it is linked to processes of transformation and becoming that disrupt dominant notions of time and history to create 'lines of flight' which express a new time and era. It is famously in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975) that Deleuze and Guattari list 'deterritorialization' as the first of three characteristics of minor literature which offers a creative mode of countering striated spaces regulated by the state apparatus.¹³ The starting point is a 1911 diary entry by Franz Kafka that considers the explicitly political character of minor literatures and their intimate entwinement in the life of the people.¹⁴ Kafka's Prague German is said to exemplify a minoritarian subversion of the major tongue.¹⁵ In *A Thousand Plateaus*, minorities are imagined as 'seeds, crystals of becoming whose value is to trigger uncontrollable movements and deterritorializations of the mean or majority.'¹⁶ Referring to Kleist and Artaud amongst other writers, this seminal work elucidates the transformative political and social dimensions of linguistic experimentation in a world where language's principal function is not to communicate but to reinforce the

dominant order.¹⁷ In her groundbreaking monograph *Writing Outside the Nation* (2001), Azade Seyhan points to the usefulness of minor literature as a conceptual framework for ‘modern literary works that challenge boundaries of genre, monolingualism, and national character’¹⁸, yet she qualifies its political significance on a number of levels. She criticizes Deleuze and Guattari both for abstracting ‘the theory away from a genuine encounter with particular political contexts and historical situations’, and for devising ‘criteria that can be too easily stretched’, suggesting that ‘[i]n a general sense, most exemplary works of literature can be understood as deterritorialized, politicized, and expressive of a collective ethos.’¹⁹ The undifferentiated character of Seyhan’s own remarks, however, does not do justice to the radical politics of Deleuze and Guattari’s project, which eschews representational modes and identity politics in favour of creative writing — and imaginative reading — strategies dedicated to generating new collectivities. By re-interrogating the mechanisms and politics of the project to liberate words, images and practices from dominant strictures of cultural tradition and hegemonic discourse, my concern is with the non-representational challenge to majoritarian discourse. My reading thus offers a complement to Ronald Bogue’s *Deleuzian Fabulation and the Scars of History* (2010), a study which brackets out the deterritorialization of language from its consideration of world literatures that trouble the status quo, whilst drawing attention to the scarcity of extended readings of literary examples of the term.²⁰ In the analysis that follows, Bergvall’s intermedial artistic practice will be seen to enable deterritorializations across text, image, voice and music that point towards the historical and contemporary imbrications of the West in mass-drownings of recent years.

The published version of *Drift* is arranged into six text-sections with interspersed sketches and graphics over 180 pages; the reading process is disorienting and few obvious signs guide the reader. The text begins with sixteen black and white illustrations of fields of horizontal lines overlaid with scribbles and inkblots. These sketches might evoke the

endlessness of a seascape or, more abstractly, stand for the disorientation of indecipherable sign systems — forming a literal barrier to comprehension.

Acknowledging its Anglo-Saxon predecessor, ‘Seafarer’ is the first text of the collection; it extends over thirty pages composed of lyric sub-sequences bearing the titles ‘Song,’ ‘North’ and ‘Hafville,’ the latter term from the Old Norse ‘hafvilla’ meaning ‘at sea’ or ‘lost at sea’ (*Drift* 153). In ‘Hafville,’ the deterritorialized text finds visual form for this experience of losing your bearings — letters are buffeted and displaced from words, merged with other words, repeated emphatically and engulfed entirely: ‘Mo stof those onboard completely l ost l ost l ost their reckoning Th / ec rew had no idea in which direction they were ststeering A thick / fo g which d i d n ot l ift for days The s hip was driven off course tol / and They were ossted about astea for a long time and f iled tor each / their destination’ (*Drift* 37). As the sub-sequence progresses, the textual disruption increases and gradually, over several pages, the reader loses sight of the poem through the textual fog:

Insert Figs. 1 and 2: ‘Hafville 3’ (Drift 38) & ‘Hafville 4’ (Drift 39)

Ultimately, the final ‘t’ of the word ‘boat’ is reproduced over two and a half pages in blocks of text that, as one reviewer points out, cause our eyes to drift, perhaps recalling ‘ripples of water, their points hinting at tips of wavelets — a calm sea to cover the now-vanished text.’²¹ The deterritorialized letter ‘t’ might also be read to stand for the Christian cross that is placed upon tombs of the deceased. In the performance, ‘[t]he syllables shatter on screen behind Bergvall, vowels sinking away as consonance emerges battered and bettered by the storm.’²² Such emphatic play with displaced letters, however, further deterritorializes the reader, who is reterritorialized as a viewer, and then again as a listener, when language sounded is given centre-stage. The attempt to translate the graphic signs into sound or semantic meaning results in a prolonged impasse that recalls Deleuze’s comments, in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, on creative stuttering as ‘what makes

language a rhizome instead of a tree, what puts language in perpetual disequilibrium.²³ In Bergvall's text, the increasingly abstract play with linguistic signs further actualizes an experience of getting lost that points towards real-life displacement and language loss, whose shattering effects defy articulation and representation.

Bergvall's vocal performance holds the piece together through a form of *Sprechgesang* that reworks lyrics from Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. As Sophie Mayer suggests in her review of a London performance, Bergvall employs these older texts 'as a way of reframing the current crisis around migration in Europe. These texts act as a reminder of Europe's cultural and economic connection to the sea, charting a course from the Vikings, through colonialism, to contemporary slavery that puts prawns on our plates.'²⁴ As has been frequently noted by reviewers, Bergvall's accented English lends material resonance to her performance. In the log, Bergvall writes: 'Languages work in profound ways. They intermingle and act as obscure relays of one another. They call up all the languages of the world' (*Drift* 161). The performance poet's voiced stream of articulation enables aural relations to be established between languages and the anonymous citational practice integrates further voices. In the second section which comprises a sixteen-part 'Song' cycle, Bergvall engages with the Anglo-Saxon text, a 125-line poem from the tenth century that describes the hardships of life at sea.²⁵ She mines the vocabulary and sound patterns of the original which offers a point of departure for wider reflection on what it means to be set adrift:

SONG 7

Thats why crossing high streams on gebattered
ships mind moves nomad with all tha t-tossing
Thats why never one so proud and bold what
goes seafaring without mægaworry ohman of
being broken into code Ferð to feran far to fare

Ferð to feran feor to go further heonan further
 hereon go forth Farout to the four winds to the
 outlands Trip it journey wayfaring outvoyage to
 geseek others plucked from this eard this earp
 this harp ok the bearded geese Blow wind blow,
 anon am I (*Drift* 49)

Relinquishing punctuation almost entirely, the lines evoke the speed and swell of a journey on the high seas. As David Kaufman has suggested, they retain heavy alliterative patterns common to Anglo-Saxon verse, as well as favoring its use of compound nouns, whilst the Germanic ‘ge’-prefix twists further movement into modern English verbs.²⁶ Bergvall integrates archaic signs into slang modern coinages — the Anglo-Saxon ash grapheme (‘æ’) is inserted into ‘mægaworry,’ whilst the contemporary exclamation “oh man” is conflated into one word, dislocating the expression to float between noun and adverb, an archaic echo in the textual now.

The explicit pairing of ‘mind’ and ‘nomad’ in line two, where the word evokes the timeless journey across high seas, calls up Deleuze and Guattari’s conceptualization of nomadic distribution in *Difference and Repetition* (1968) and *A Thousand Plateaus*, which offers a means of reconceptualizing space through a political ethic that rejects political ties to specific locations and reconfigures the way in which individuals relate to social and political space. For Deleuze and Guattari, ‘nomads can be termed the Deterritorialized par excellence’ and they are understood to offer a means of conceptualizing a smooth space that is not delimited or divisible.²⁷ As has been argued by John Sellars, Deleuze’s concept of nomadic distribution thus forms ‘the foundation for what is arguably the nearest thing to a political philosophy within his oeuvre’²⁸ and can be understood within a wider tradition that ‘holds that all human beings belong to a single global community and that this universal community is more fundamental than the local political states into

which individuals are born.²⁹ Deleuze's political interpretation of nomadism is methodologically useful for an interpretation of Bergvall's multilingual project because it serves to emphasize the degree to which the lyrical mode of *Drift* is deployed to question fixed borders and signifiers and so reflect on the contemporary crisis in the Mediterranean.

The collective significance of Bergvall's multilingual play emerges from further consideration of 'Song 7'. The chain of words that takes its starting point from 'Ferð,' the Anglo-Saxon word for 'heart' or 'spirit,' as well as 'journey,' the latter meaning shared in Old Norse, operates on a principle of 'homophonic call and response' (*Drift* 144). Bergvall does not attempt a meticulous tracing of etymologies, rather she veers away from semantic meaning to follow what she terms 'the strongly sound-led rules of the original' (*Drift* 144). Here in particular, Bergvall's project displays striking parallels with Deleuze and Guattari's 'minor literature.' 'The sound or the word that traverses this new deterritorialization,' they write:

no longer belongs to a language of sense, even though it derives from it, nor is it organized music or song, even though it might appear to be. (...) Instead, it is now a question of a becoming that includes the maximum of difference as a difference of intensity, the crossing of a barrier, a rising or a falling, a bending or an erecting, an accent on the word. (...) To make the sequences vibrate, to open the word onto unexpected internal intensities – in short, an asignifying *intensive utilization* of language. Furthermore, there is no longer a subject of the enunciation, nor a subject of the statement. (...) Rather there is a circuit of states that forms a mutual becoming, in the heart of a necessarily multiple or collective assemblage. (*Kafka* 21–22)

It seems no coincidence that Bergvall begins her lyric call with a word for 'journey' once shared between languages. The aural dimensions of language sounded enable a pulsing

chain of voiced relations that do away with the fatal gap between subject and object in a moment of connection. Throughout the cycle, the final line ‘Blow wind blow, anon am I’ vibrates in the ambivalent closing refrain. For David Kaufmann this forms ‘a lovely buff’ as ‘[t]he speaker of the poem is “anon” to the extent that she is always about to arrive, to get to the point. (...) At the same time, she is not “anon.” Though the speaker might be anonymous (as is the author of “The Seafarer”), the author Caroline Bergvall is not.’³⁰ Yet here, further echoes of Deleuze and Guattari might also be heard. In older usage, the English adjective ‘anon’ promises arrival and so the lyric songs can be read to close in a moment of ‘becoming.’ In its modern usage, the word obliterates the subject, as the lyric text speaks out collectively on behalf of all those set adrift.

By changing the subject position in this performance of a collective enunciation, Bergvall’s text reflects Deleuze and Guattari’s commitment to a non-representational aesthetics that rejects traditional identity politics. It is this dimension of their work, however, that has come under intense criticism from postcolonial critics such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. In her seminal essay ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’ (1988), Spivak accuses Deleuze of having a hidden essentialist agenda,³¹ criticizing him as a ‘first-world intellectual masquerading as the absent nonrepresenter who lets the oppressed speak for themselves.’³² As well as condemning the complicity of post-representation in maintaining the status quo, she points to the necessity of representation for those who cannot speak. More recent postcolonial criticism, however, has questioned Spivak’s ‘cursory’ and partial treatment of Deleuze that misreads his understanding of the subject, as well as his treatment of difference.³³ Disputing the suggestion that ‘a post-representational position implies an inability or unwillingness to investigate or theorize the working of representation’³⁴ and highlighting instead the need for alternatives to representation as a political strategy,³⁵ these critics stress Deleuze’s concern with minor production as a means of evading the commodification of ethnicity and of disrupting

familiar narratives and frameworks. Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey emphasize in their defense Deleuze and Guattari's particular conception of the relationship to the excluded or nomadic other, writing: "This other is summoned forth by art and philosophy, but is disavowed by dominant reason, and for them, the point is to write *for* this other — not "for their benefit" and not "in their place", but "before", as a question of becoming."³⁶ In *What is Philosophy?* (1991), Deleuze and Guattari foreground absolute deterritorialization as fundamental to the task of philosophy to summon forth a new people — 'the people to come'³⁷ —, identifying the future earth and its people as the sites of reterritorialization: 'Deterritorialization of such a plane [the milieu of immanence's plane of relative deterritorialization] does not preclude reterritorialization but posits it as the creation of a future new earth.'³⁸ For Ronald Bogue this constitutes a politically transformative project that rejects a rationally ordered cosmos and combines macro- and micropolitical action to develop creative strategies for initiating social change, which he terms chaosmopolitanism.³⁹ In particular, Bogue takes issue with John Sellars's reading of Deleuze's cosmopolitanism as 'ultimately utopian' and his claim that '[i]t does not offer a model for collective political action but rather outlines a personal ethical project of self-transformation in which each individual alters their own relation to space and to traditional political states.'⁴⁰ Instead, Bogue argues for 'chaosmopolitanism's "realistic utopianism", which connects deterritorialized thought to the pragmatic realm of sociopolitical action.'⁴¹ I read Bergvall's project in these terms by tracing her sociopolitical effort to establish intersectional forms of solidarity and witness. Bergvall's Deleuzian figuration of her own privilege as a white Western subject might even be read in line with Gayatri Spivak, who — in 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia' — comments: "The only way I can hope to suggest how the center itself is marginal is by not remaining outside in the margin and pointing my accusing finger at the center. I might do it rather by implicating myself in that center and sensing what politics make it marginal."⁴² Ultimately,

by deterritorializing the centre, Bergvall's project makes a wider call for new legal protections and visibility for those denied basic rights and liberties.

In her very choice of artistic tools of production, Bergvall can be seen implicating herself. For the Geneva première, extracts from which are available to view online, languages mixed and live voice and percussion met against a backdrop of 3D text.⁴³ The technologies used to create these text projections were adapted from programmes used by nautical scientists tracking boats that got lost on the way from Africa to Europe, which were — in turn — taken from those employed by Western states for tracking the movement of freight on major commercial shipping lines.⁴⁴ The technological tools of artistic production are therefore imbricated in those very flows of capital which determine exchange between Africa and Europe. The visual character of the text projections renders the narrative a drifting language mass that finds imagistic form for the process of linguistic shift and transformation at the heart of the project. Bergvall's performative engagement with the very commercial shipping technologies that themselves are adapted for humanitarian ends therefore enables a creative deterritorialization of those capitalist forces in relation to which — according to Deleuze — any outside position is impossible. Far from seeking aesthetic transcendence, *Drift*'s materialist project instead reflects the constitution of existence through material flows and intensities of difference.

The further feminist dimensions of this project are given explicit articulation in 'Log', a discursive reflection towards the close of the text, in which Bergvall comments on the importance of feminist thought for her methods. Bergvall quotes Sara Ahmed who argues that 'being lost is a way of inhabiting space by registering what is not familiar' (*Drift* 139).⁴⁵ Thematising issues of gender and sexuality, Bergvall highlights Ahmed's literal application of sexual orientation 'to spatialize sexuality into directional dynamics' (*Drift* 139) as illuminating for her own practice. Bergvall stresses the material dimensions of her struggle in *Drift* and explains how tracking her own uprootings, departures and

arrivals enables ‘deep magnetic oscillations across the entire spectrum of travelling and dwelling’ which permit her to experience ‘[t]he growing reality of collective departures and arrivals (...) as dynamic pattern formations, generative in a programming sense of the way they affect any port of call’ (*Drift* 140). In this way, Bergvall offers a creative response to Ahmed’s critique of Rosi Braidotti’s metaphoric interpretation of the nomad in *Nomadic Subjects* (1994).⁴⁶ Ahmed accuses Braidotti of erasing ‘cultural difference through the figuring of the nomad as a general way of thinking,’ an abstraction that leads to an implied separation of nomadism ‘from the material social relations in which thought itself is idealized as the rational capacity of well-educated subjects.’⁴⁷ Instead, Bergvall foregrounds the material emergence of thought through her collaboration with the visual artist Thomas Köppel.⁴⁸ At the end of her ‘Log’, she underlines her solidarity as a queer woman with other minorities, referring to her relationship with a woman and the fear that accompanies their decision to be together. Unlike Braidotti who straightforwardly suggests that it was the ‘stability and sense of partial belonging, supported by a permanent job and a happy relationship’ that enabled her to ‘actually start thinking adequately about nomadism,’⁴⁹ Bergvall is concerned to engage in more nuanced terms with the experiential blind-spots and moments of tension that foster wider solidarity. In a move that could at once be interpreted through Deleuze as a reflection on the possibility for the minor writer ‘to express another possible community’ (*Kafka* 17) and through Spivak as an interrogation of her own implication in the centre, Bergvall acknowledges that recent legal protections for the LGBT community have fostered her awareness of the precariousness of other lives:

To be with me, she must tell her husband, her kids, her family. A deep animal fear at this profound and life-changing impulse also resurfaces in me. Are you safe. (...) To be protected in law gives a further collective implication to it all. Families, vigilantes and coastguards can no longer in all

impunity go to work on those it has taken to be haflings and skraelings. But the menacing fear and the deep collective memory remain at the point of crossing, at the point of sailing, as one raises the anchor, as one ships out. They are sustained in the more obscure aspects of one's living and re-engage in full force in the face of others who still must live in abject lawlessness, in different degrees of hideout. (*Drift* 165-6)

The affective connection articulated in these lines alludes to submerged aspects of subjective experience that resurface in moments of felt recognition with those in states of emergency, as well as in the awareness of her own privileged remove. A further crucial difference in the respective textual politics of Braidotti and Bergvall lies in their engagement with the situation of refugees and asylum seekers. Whilst Braidotti includes only a few fleeting references to refugees — predominantly in the preface to the second edition of her study —, foregrounding instead a mobile nomadic subject in terms that feminist critics such as Irene Gedalof and Inge Boer have suggested neglects real material-social conditions and idealizes a dangerously abstract in-between realm,⁵⁰ Bergvall documents a case of mass-drowning in the Mediterranean at the height of the Arab Spring at the centre of her text.

In the fourth section of *Drift*, Bergvall focuses on a human rights report on the 'Left-to-Die Boat' case. Bergvall notes in her log of work that she read about the case in the *Guardian* on 11 April 2012 (*Drift* 132). The report by researchers at Goldsmiths, University of London, 'focuses on the spatial analysis of data surrounding the case of the "left-to-die boat"' and employs a wide range of digital mapping and modelling technologies.' The report draws together survivor testimonies and spatial analysis as part of the ERC-funded and Turner Prize-nominated *Forensic Architecture* research project, whose website declares a commitment 'to the reversal of the forensic gaze, to ways of turning forensics into a counter-hegemonic practice able to challenge state and corporate

violence’ and whose investigations are said to ‘take place mainly in zones outside the effective control of states and its frames of criminal justice.’⁵¹ The report states its aim to collate and analyze data, reports and human testimonies to establish ‘what happened to the “left-to-die boat” and who was involved in the events leading to the deaths of 63 migrants.’⁵² It concludes in damning indictment that the migrants’ vessel was left to drift slowly ‘within one of the most surveilled maritime areas in the world, populated by at least 38 naval assets,’ where the responsibility to intervene and prevent the deaths of the people on board was shirked by all those who came into contact with the craft.⁵³

Bergvall’s log highlights the relevance of the forensic principle that ‘every action or contact leaves a trace’ for her own practice, setting out her intention to ‘relay the report’s complex piece of memorialisation, interpretation and investigation through live recitation. To register the events through recitation’ (*Drift* 134). Without literary embellishment or reworking, Bergvall cites directly from the human rights report over eleven pages in section four, inserting paragraph breaks and italicizing the typescript in the published version of her text to highlight statements from survivors. The use of white ink on a black background signals the visual dimension of Bergvall’s effort to trace the migrants’ experience out at sea. In turn, her text gives details of what happened after their boat began to drift in high waves on the morning of 28 March 2011:

Insert Fig. 3 ‘Report’ (Drift 80)

Factual formulations from the report that describe circumstances of human emergency are juxtaposed with muted witness statements whose pared-down syntax forges a powerful means of calling attention to the stark facts of the case. Cherry Smyth comments astutely that Bergvall ‘refuses a dirge-like tone as if the despair and suffering of the migrants must be conveyed in the starkest, clearest syntax, a syntax that foresees the language of the trial, the delivery of justice and, ultimately, the responsibility to change.’⁵⁴

In this respect, the fourth part of *Drift* exists in intriguing tension with those lyrical sections that precede it. Attempts at experimental form are foregone in the engagement with the human rights report, a decision that reflects the project to demand accountability for the humanitarian crimes committed.

The political force of Bergvall's text and performance project is therefore to be situated at once in the stark testimonial found at its centre, as well as in the Deleuzian lyric framework that foregrounds the interrelatedness of human experiences and inorganic life that passes through all beings. The testimonial delivered in 'Report' powerfully evidences contemporary human rights violations in zones outside the control of states and makes space for those voices otherwise going unheard in contemporary Europe. Yet simultaneously, Bergvall's multilingual lyric framework provides an affective counter to dominant majoritarian discourse from which refugee experience is absent, reworking ancient texts into a contemporary lyric reflection on a modern-day mass-drowning. By engaging with the quasi-material connections between languages and sign systems, *Drift* brings about a transfiguration of the present that appeals for change. In her creative deployment of Western technologies used to track boats between Africa and Europe, the white female artist can further be seen to acknowledge her own imbrication in the centre, as well as to devise a deterritorializing practice that uses the very forces and technologies of capitalism for other ends. This central tension is crucial to Bergvall's method throughout *Drift* which derives its force through forms of de- and reterritorialization across languages and media and opens up new lines of affiliation to imagined collectivities and futures as yet unknown. As a piece of nomadic testimony, *Drift* calls up an ocean voyage full of risk through a shifting field of archaic words, multilingual neologisms and textual slippages that metonymically enact instances of human dislocation and re-connection. Its heterolingual forms break down borders between languages, revealing language instead to be an open organism, always in a

condition of dialogue and rupture, and gesturing towards Europe itself as a space in which new constellations and compositions emerge through processes of migration. In this respect, Bergvall's project might be seen to gesture towards new models of deterritorialized rights and disaggregated citizenship which — as prominent political theorist Seyla Benhabib has pointed out — 'permi[t] individuals to develop and sustain multiple allegiances and networks across nation-state boundaries, in inter- as well as transnational contexts.'⁵⁵ By changing the subject position to hold forms of language to account for their forced exclusions, *Drift* actualizes a multilingual politics of speech and performance that reinscribes lost letters and obsolete sounds to devise a means of si(gh)ting and sounding ancient and contemporary histories that would otherwise go unseen and unheard.

¹ I am very grateful to the editors of *Paragraph* for their helpful comments on this essay, as well as to Caroline Bergvall and Nightboat Books for permission to reproduce sections from *Drift* (2014).

² Tara Brian and Frank Laczko, eds, *Fatal Journeys: Tracking Lives Lost during Migration* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2014), 20.
https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/fataljourneys_countingtheuncounted.pdf/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.

³ <https://missingmigrants.iom.int/region/mediterranean/>, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.

⁴ Frank Laczko, Ann Singleton and Julia Black, eds, *Fatal Journeys: Improving Data on Missing Migrants* (Geneva: International Organization for Migration, 2017), 25–46.
https://publications.iom.int/system/files/pdf/fatal_journeys_volume_3_part_1.pdf/, consulted 30 November 2017, 2.30pm.

⁵ 'The room was busy / the living were noisy / crowding out the place / the dead were marching through / no one was paying any attention / that's when I started to.' Caroline Bergvall, *Drift* (Brooklyn and Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2014), p. 101. Hereafter cited as *Drift*.

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- ⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, translated by Dana Polan (Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986) 26. Hereafter cited as *Kafka*.
- ⁷ C.f. Simone Bignall and Paul Patton, 'Deleuze and the Postcolonial: Conversations, Negotiations, Mediations' in *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, edited by Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015), 1–19.
- ⁸ <http://www.carolinebergvall.com/drift-performance.php/>, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.
- ⁹ www.pennedinthemargins.co.uk/index.php/2014/05/tour-dates-for-caroline-bergvall-drift-announced/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.
- ¹⁰ Charles Heller, Lorenzo Pezzani and Situ Studio, *Report on the "Left-to-Die Boat"* (Goldsmiths, University of London: Forensic Oceanography, 2012). www.forensic-architecture.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/FO-report.pdf/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.
- ¹¹ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, translated by H. Tomlinson and G. Burchell (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 109.
- ¹² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Robert Hurley, Mark Seem and Helen R. Lane (London: Continuum, 2004).
- ¹³ Deleuze and Guattari define minor literature by 'the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy and the collective assemblage of enunciation' (*Kafka*, 18).
- ¹⁴ Franz Kafka, *Tagebücher*, edited by Hans-Gerd Koch, Michael Müller and Malcolm Pasley (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer, 1990), 326.
- ¹⁵ For Deleuze and Guattari, minoritarian does not denote a minority in any quantitative sense, rather the term derives from the relationship of a minority to the majority. C.f. Paul Patton, *Deleuze and the Political* (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 7; Christian Jäger, 'Grenzkontrollpunkte. Methodologische Probleme des Transitraums und der "kleinen Literatur"' in *Transitraum Deutsch: Literatur und Kultur im transnationalen Zeitalter*, edited by Jens Adam, Hans-Joachim Hahn, Lucjan Puchalski and Irena Światłowska (Wrocław and Dresden: Neisse, 2007), 41–51 (42).

¹⁶ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, translated by Brian Massumi (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), 123.

¹⁷ Cf. ‘The necessity of not having control over language, of being a foreigner in one’s own tongue, in order to draw speech to oneself and “bring something incomprehensible into the world.”’ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 440.

¹⁸ Azade Seyhan, *Writing Outside the Nation* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), 27.

¹⁹ Seyhan, *Writing Outside*, 29.

²⁰ ‘All too often in discussions of the deterritorialisation of language, including those of Deleuze and Guattari, concrete examples and extended close readings are rare. Even rarer are discussions that examine the deterritorialisations of one language via another, as takes place when a bi- or tri-lingual novelist allows the sounds, rhythms and syntactic patterns of a second or third language subtly to modify and render “other” the language in which the novel is written.’ Ronald Bogue, *Deleuzian Fabulation and the Scars of History* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 10-11.

²¹ Poetry Foundation, ‘Catching the Drift’ (2014) poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/guide/97/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.

²² Cherry Smyth, ‘Caroline Bergvall: Drift’, *Art Monthly* 380, October (2014), 31.

²³ Gilles Deleuze, ‘He Stuttered’ in *Essays Critical and Clinical*, translated by Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 107–14 (111).

²⁴ Sophie Mayer, ‘All at Sea’, *The f word: contemporary uk feminism* (blog), August 26, 2014. thefword.org.uk/reviews/2014/08/all_at_sea/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.

²⁵ I.L. Gordon, ed., *The Seafarer* (London: Methuen, 1960), 1–2.

²⁶ David Kaufmann, ‘David Kaufmann reviews Caroline Bergvall’s *Drift*’, *Asymptote* (2014). www.asymptotejournal.com/article.php?cat=Criticism&id=81/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.

²⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 444-5.

²⁸ John Sellars, ‘Deleuze and cosmopolitanism’, *Radical Philosophy* 142 (2007): 30–7 (33).

²⁹ Sellars, 30.

³⁰ Sellars, 30.

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- ³¹ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?' in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, edited by Cary Nelson and Lawrence Grossberg (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988) 271–313 (285).
- ³² Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', 292.
- ³³ Andrew Robinson and Simon Tormey, 'Living in Smooth Space: Deleuze, Postcolonialism and the Subaltern' in *Deleuze and the Postcolonial*, edited by Simone Bignall and Paul Patton (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015) 20–40.
- ³⁴ Robinson and Tormey, 28.
- ³⁵ Robinson and Tormey, 30.
- ³⁶ Robinson and Tormey, 32.
- ³⁷ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 109.
- ³⁸ Deleuze and Guattari, *What is Philosophy?*, 88.
- ³⁹ Ronald Bogue, 'Nature, Law and Chaomopolitanism' in *Revisiting Normativity with Deleuze*, edited by Rosi Braidotti and Patricia Pisters (London and New York: Bloomsbury: 2012) 98–112 (98).
- ⁴⁰ Sellars, 'Deleuze and cosmopolitanism', 37.
- ⁴¹ Bogue, 'Nature, Law and Chaomopolitanism', 111–12.
- ⁴² Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Explanation and Culture: Marginalia' in *In Other Worlds: Essays in Cultural Politics* (New York: Methuen, 1987) 103–118 (107). For a more detailed discussion of this aspect of Spivak's thought, see: B. Venkat Mani, *Cosmopolitical Claims: Turkish-German Literatures from Nadolny to Pamuk* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007) 39–40; 186.
- ⁴³ <https://vimeo.com/75406238/>, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.
- ⁴⁴ Comments by Bergvall at the Austrian Cultural Forum London, 14 November 2013.
- ⁴⁵ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2006), 7.
- ⁴⁶ Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2011).

⁴⁷ Sara Ahmed, 'Home and away: narratives of migration and estrangement', *International Journal of Cultural Studies* 2:3 (1999): 329–47 (335).

⁴⁸ 'A vast open syntax of textual mass. The elements move around one another, are drawn and repelled, answer to separate yet co-extensive syntactical instances. It will take me a long time to understand how to do it and how to get there.' (*Drift* 140)

⁴⁹ Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects*, 65.

⁵⁰ Irene Gedalof, 'Identity in Transit: Nomads, Cyborgs and Women', *European Journal of Women's Studies* 7, no. 3 (2000), 337–54 (343–4).

⁵¹ www.forensic-architecture.org/project/, consulted 17 March 2018, 3.30pm.

⁵² Heller, Pezzani and Situ Studio, *Report on the "Left-to-Die Boat"*, 48.

⁵³ Heller, Pezzani and Situ Studio, *Report on the "Left-to-Die Boat"*, 48.

⁵⁴ Smyth, 'Caroline Bergvall', 31.

⁵⁵ Seyla Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 174.